

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SY-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

RSR-01 CPR-02 OPR-02 PPT-02 SCA-01 FBI-01 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2397

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 3581

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPAS, IR

SUBJECT: NASSER AFSHAR " GHOTLI"

REF: A. TEHRAN 3263; B. TEHRAN 3286; C. STATE 98076

1. CHARGE WAS SUMMONED TO MFA THIS MORNING MAY 23 BY SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR GENERAL NADIM, WHO REFERRED TO DISCUSSIONS OUTLINED IN REF A AND B REGARDING NASSER AFSHAR, AND THEN UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIM RAISED QUESTION OF APRIL/ MAY 1973 ISSUE OF IRAN FREE PRESS WHICH SHAH HAD JUST SEEN. NADIM SAID SHAH WAS SHOCKED OVER SCURRILOUS CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE AND DISTURBED THAT COUNTRY WITH WHICH IRAN HAS SUCH CLOSE RELATIONS COULD PERMIT PUBLICATION OF THIS TYPE OF YELLOW JOURNALISM WHICH FULL OF LIBELOUS, IRRESPONSIBLE AND INACCURATE STATEMENTS.

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2. IN REPLY CHARGE SAID THAT HE FULLY AGREED WITH NADIM'S DESCRIPTION OF THIS PUBLICATION WITH ITS DISGRACEFUL CONTENTS, THAT WE HAVE BEEN EXPLORING WITH WASHINGTON FOR SOMETIME WHETHER ACTION COULD BE TAKEN AGAINST IRAN FREE PRESS, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS SO FAR, AND THAT
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SHAH'S VIEWS AS REPORTED BY NADIM WOULD BE PROMPTLY RELAYED TO WASHINGTON. HE SUGGESTED MFA MIGHT WISH INSTRUCT AMBASSADOR ZAHEDI TO MAKE SAME POINTS TO DEPARTMENT TO UNDERSCORE SHAH'S CONCERN. MEANWHILE WE EXPECTED MOMENTARILY REPLY TO QUESTIONS REGARDING NASSER AFSHAR WHICH MFA HAD PUT TO US AS REPORTED IN REF A AND B. (REF C ARRIVED AFTER THIS MEETING).

3. COMMENT: SHELTERED AS HE IS BY LOCAL CONVENTIONS AND PRACTICES FROM ANY CRITICISM, SHAH HAS ALWAYS BEEN SENSITIVE TO CRITICAL COMMENTS DIRECTED AGAINST HIM OR HIS REGIME. AS HE GAINS IN STATURE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE HE IS INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE AND FINDS IT MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN COUNTRIES LIKE US AND GERMANY WHICH HE SEES AS OVERLY PERMISSIVE AND WHICH APPEAR TO TOLERATE AND CONDONE ANTI-IRANIAN ACTIVITIES AND PERSONAL ATTACKS ON SHAH. RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN AND GERMANY IN RECENT YEARS HAVE SEVERAL TIMES BEEN STRAINED BECAUSE OF SUCH DEVELOPMENTS, BUT DURING SAME PERIOD WE HAVE BEEN SPARED IMPERIAL UNHAPPINESS OVER OCCASIONAL ANTI-IRANIAN DEMONSTRATION IN US OR ACTIVITIES OF PERSONS LIKE NASSER AFSHAR AND HIS IRAN FREE PRESS. AS SUGGESTED IN REF A SHAH HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED NOT TO IGNORE ANY FURTHER ANTI-SHAH ELEMENTS IN US AND, GIVEN CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, HE APPARENTLY HOPES WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE AFSHAR BEFORE HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO US.

4. IN THIS CONTEXT REF C IS HELPFUL IN ANSWERING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT AFSHAR BUT WE BELIEVE WE ALSO NEED MORE GENERAL MESSAGE WHICH WILL MESSAGE SHAH'S SENSITIVITIES AND PUT IRAN FREE PRESS AND AFSHAR IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE. IN RESPONDING TO MFA QUERIES WE WILL DRAW ON REF C BUT WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT MATTER HAS BEEN CONSIDERED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS AT HIGH LEVELS OF USG AND THAT USG DEEPLY DEPLORES YELLOW JOURNALISM REPRESENTED BY IRAN FREE PRESS AND TOTALLY DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM THIS PUBLICATION. FURTHER, BECAUSE OF OUR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND REGARD FOR HIM, WE HAVE EXAMINED CAREFULLY WHAT STEPS COULD BE TAKEN AGAINST AFSHAR AND HIS PUBLICATION BUT UNDER OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, TRADITIONAL FREEDOM ACCORDED PRESS UNDER CONSTITUTION AND OTHER RELEVANT LAWS, WE HAVE REGRETTABLY COME TO CONCLUSION THAT THERE ARE NO LEGAL STEPS THAT WE CAN TAKE AND IN OUR JUDGMENT RESORT TO COURTS AGAINST THIS PUBLICATION WOULD NOT BE PRODUCTIVE.

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5. UNLESS DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THERE IS SOMETHING WE CAN

DO ABOUT AFSHAR AND HIS PUBLICATION EMBASSY RECOMMENDS
WE BE AUTHORIZED TO RESPOND TO MFA ALONG FOREGOING
LINES. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE BE ABLE TO SAY WE
ARE SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF HIGH LEVELS WITHIN USG.
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